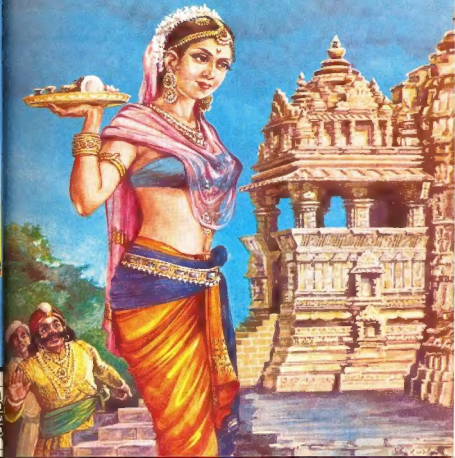




# Vasantasena

An Adaptation of the Famous  
Sanskrit Play, Mrichchakatikam





Illustrated Classics From India

## Vasantasena

Adapted from Shudra's Mrichchakatikam

This Amar Chitra Katha has been adapted from Mrichchakatikam by Shudraka, which is regarded as one of the Sanskrit classics. Yet, it is unique in its plot and characterisation. The story tells of a king who is overthrown by a leader of the people. This assumes added significance especially since the author of the play, Shudraka, was a king. The play was written between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD. It is an intriguing story with myriad twists and turns in the plot.

This tale contains a number of romantic and exciting characters like the wealthy and beautiful dancer Vasantasena who loves the noble but impoverished merchant Charudatta, and Vasantasena's faithful slave Madanika who is loved by the brave Sharvilaka, who in turn is involved in the usurped Prince Aryaka's struggle to regain his kingdom.

Mrichchakatikam literally means a "clay cart". It refers to the toy cart that Charudatta's son plays with. The play depicts a sufficiently advanced society. The political theme and secular treatment gives this play contemporary relevance. Vasantasena has been translated into English and French and successfully produced in its English version in the USA.

Script: Kamala Chandrakant   Illustrations: G.R. Naik

# VASANTASENA



PALAKA, KING OF LJWAINI, HAD COME TO THE THRONE ONLY BECAUSE HIS BROTHER GOPALA HAD ABDICATED IN HIS FAVOUR.

PALAKA WAS A TYRANT. MOST OF HIS SUBJECTS HATED HIM.

SHARVILAKA, PALAKA IS BECOMING MORE RUTHLESS, AND HAS GIVEN A FREE HAND TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, THE WICKED SAMSTHANAKA.

NEVER MIND, MY FRIEND. BE PATIENT. IT IS PROPHESED THAT ARYAKA, GOPALA'S SON WILL SOON BECOME KING.

SHARVILAKA WAS A LEADER OF ARYAKA'S SUPPORTERS.

WE MUST SEE THAT THE PROPHECY COMES TRUE.

YES, YOU MUST JOIN US AND WORK FOR IT.

IN THAT SAME TOWN LIVED VASANTASENA A BEAUTIFUL, WEALTHY DANCER WHO OFTEN WENT TO THE TEMPLE OF KAMADEVA NEAR BY. ONE DAY -

AH! THERE HE IS AGAIN. THEY SAY HIS NAME IS CHARUDATTA. HOW NOBLE HE LOOKS.



HE WAS ONCE VERY RICH AND HAD MANY FRIENDS. BUT HE LOST ALL HIS WEALTH AND WITH IT HIS FRIENDS. ALL EXCEPT THE LOVAL MAITREYA.

AFTER A WHILE, VASANTASENA TURNED HOMEWARDS.



IF ONLY I COULD MEET HIM ONCE!

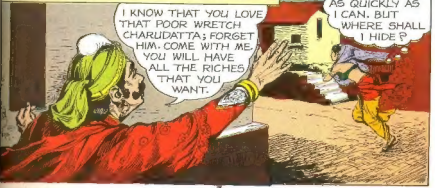


SUDDENLY—

STOP! VASANTASENA, STOP! DON'T BE AFRAID.

OH! NO! IT IS THE EVIL SAMSTHANAKA. WHAT SHALL I DO? I'M ALL ALONE.

VASANTASENA RAN AS FAST AS SHE COULD.



I KNOW THAT YOU LOVE THAT POOR WRETCH CHARUDATTA; FORGET HIM. COME WITH ME. YOU WILL HAVE ALL THE RICHES THAT YOU WANT.

I MUST ESCAPE AS QUICKLY AS I CAN. BUT WHERE SHALL I HIDE?

SAMSTHANAKA CONTINUED TO CHASE HER.

SEE THAT RICKETY GATE. BEYOND IT LIES HIS EVEN MORE WRETCHED HOUSE.

WHAT! CHARUDATTA'S HOUSE! THE EVIL FELLOW HAS SHOWN ME MY REFUGE.



VASANTASENA RAN STRAIGHT IN THROUGH THE GATE.

HEY! WAIT! NOW WHERE DID SHE VANISH?



BUT BY THEN, VASANTASENA HAD ALMOST REACHED THE HOUSE.

MAITREYA, WHO IS THAT BEAUTIFUL WOMAN?

IT IS VASANTASENA. THE WHOLE OF UJJAINI KNOWS THAT SHE IS IN LOVE WITH YOU AND HAS REJECTED THE POWERFUL SAMSTHANAKA.



I AM TOO POOR FOR ALL THAT SHE IS A FINE WOMAN AND IT IS WRONG OF SAMSTHANAKA TO TROUBLE HER WITH HIS ATTENTIONS.

CAREFUL, MY FRIEND. DO YOU WANT TO EARN HIS UNDYING HATRED? AH! THERE SHE COMES.



VASANTASENA!  
WHAT CAN WE  
DO FOR YOU?

SIR, A CERTAIN  
SCOUNDREL  
CHASED ME FOR  
MY JEWELS. WILL  
YOU KEEP THEM  
SAFE FOR ME?



BUT MY HOUSE  
IS HARDLY FIT  
TO GUARD SUCH  
TREASURES.

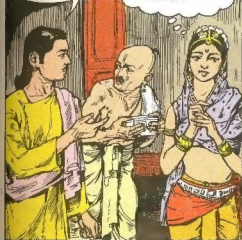
EXCUSE ME, SIR.  
IT IS IN YOU  
AND NOT IN  
YOUR HOUSE  
THAT I PLACE  
MY CONFIDENCE.



CHARUDATTA TOOK THE JEWELS  
AND GAVE THEM TO MAITREYA.

GUARD THEM  
WITH YOUR  
LIFE.

NOW I AM ASSURED  
OF OPPORTUNITIES  
TO MEET HIM  
AGAIN.



NOW, KIND SIR,  
IT IS GETTING  
DARK. MAY  
I TAKE YOUR  
LEAVE?

WE  
SHALL  
ESCORT  
YOU  
HOME.



WHEN THEY REACHED THE GATE  
OF HER HOUSE -

AH! THERE  
GOES MADANIKA,  
MY FAITHFUL  
SLAVE. THANK  
YOU, SIR.

FARE  
YOU  
WELL.



ONCE INSIDE, VASANTASENA  
CONFIDED IN MADANIKA.

NOW THAT YOUR  
JEWELS ARE IN  
HIS CARE YOU  
CAN MEET HIM  
OFTENER, MY  
LADY.

THAT HAS  
OCCURRED  
TO ME  
TOO.



HOW WELL I UNDER-  
STAND MY MISTRESS'S  
FEELINGS! MY LOVE  
FOR SHARVILAKA  
WOULD HAVE MADE ME  
DO THE SAME. HOW  
I LONG FOR THE DAY  
WHEN I MIGHT BECOME  
HIS WIFE.



MEANWHILE, CHARUDATTA AND MAITREY  
WERE RETIRING FOR THE NIGHT.

ARE THE  
JEWELS  
SAFE?

YES! RIGHT UNDER  
MY PILLOW. WE  
MAY SLEEP IN  
PEACE.

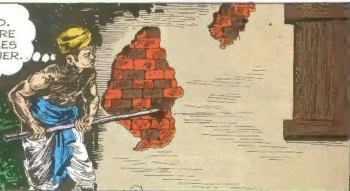


THAT NIGHT A FIGURE STOLE QUIETLY INTO CHARUDATTA'S GARDEN. IT WAS SHARVILAKA.

PALAKA'S RULE  
MAKES ME A THIEF.  
MADANIKA, I KNOW  
OF NO OTHER WAY  
TO BUY YOUR  
FREEDOM AND  
TO MAKE YOU  
MY WIFE.



HM.M! THIS  
HOUSE IS OLD.  
THE WALLS ARE  
WEAK. IT MAKES  
MY TASK EASIER.



SHARVILAKA ENTERED THE ROOM WHERE CHARUDATTA AND  
MAITREYA WERE SLEEPING.

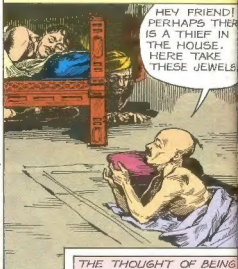
ALL ARE ASLEEP.  
BUT THE ROOM IS  
BARE. HAS THE RICH  
FACADE DECEIVED  
ME ?



THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE SEEMS TO BE A LOVER OF MUSIC AND DANCING.

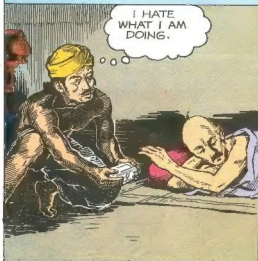


JUST THEN MAITREYA, HALF ASLEEP, SAW THE BREACH IN THE WALL.



HEY FRIEND! PERHAPS THERE IS A THIEF IN THE HOUSE. HERE TAKE THESE JEWELS

IN THE DARK MAITREYA MISTOOK SHARVILAKA FOR CHARUDATTA.



I HATE WHAT I AM DOING.

THE THOUGHT OF BEING ABLE TO BUY MADANIKA'S FREEDOM STILLED HIS UNEASY CONSCIENCE.



BUT THIS WILL MAKE MADANIKA MINE.

JUST THEN A MAID ENTERED THE ROOM.

THANK GOD! IT'S ONLY A WOMAN. BUT I'D BETTER ESCAPE BEFORE SHE RAISES AN ALARM.

THIEF! THIEF! MASTER! MASTER, WAKE UP!

MAITREYA WAS THE FIRST TO WAKE UP.

WHAT ARE YOU SHOUTING FOR?

A THIEF HAS BROKEN INTO THE HOUSE. HE HAS ESCAPED.

HO! HO! HO! HOW DISAPPOINTED HE MUST HAVE... HEY, THE JEWELS! WHERE ARE THE JEWELS? CHARUDATTA, GET UP!

MAITREYA WAS NOW WORRIED.

CHARUDATTA, WHERE ARE THE JEWELS I GAVE YOU?

JEWELS? YOU GAVE ME? YOU MUST BE DREAMING

ALAS! THEY  
HAVE BEEN  
STOLEN.

O RELENTLESS FATE!  
SO FAR SHE HAD ONLY  
DEPRIVED ME OF MY  
WEALTH. NOW SHE  
ATTACKS MY VERY  
HONOUR.

I CANNOT BEAR  
THE DISTRESS OF  
MY GOOD MASTER.  
I MUST GO AND  
TELL MY MISTRESS.

AFTER THE MAID HAD TOLD  
HER THE WHOLE STORY...

ALAS! ALL UJJAINI WILL  
SAY THAT MY HUSBAND,  
BECAUSE OF HIS POVERTY,  
HAS KEPT THE JEWELS  
FOR HIMSELF AND....

SEND MAITREYA  
TO ME.

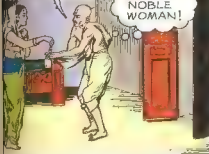
ALL THAT I HAVE  
IS MY INVALUABLE  
PEARL NECKLACE. THE  
ONE MY MOTHER GAVE  
ME. IT WILL REDEEM  
MY HUSBAND'S  
HONOUR AND  
MORE.

WHEN MAITREYA CAME--

MAITREYA, TAKE THESE PEARLS AND PRESERVE MY HUSBAND'S HONOUR. BE DISCREET. RESPECT HIS SENTIMENTS.

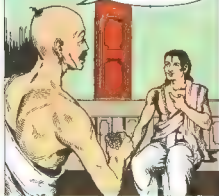
I SHALL.

WHAT A NOBLE WOMAN!



MAITREYA TOOK THE PEARLS TO CHARUDATTA.

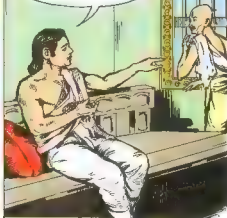
TAKE THIS. FROM A DEVOTED WIFE.



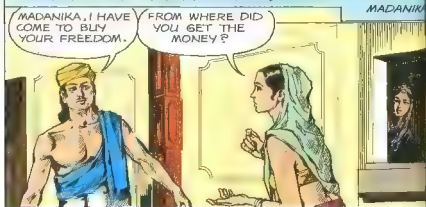
I AM INDEED A RICH MAN. I HAVE A LOVING WIFE, A LOYAL FRIEND, AND MY HONOUR, WHICH A POOR MAN CAN SELDOM KEEP.



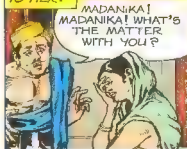
MAITREYA, GO TOMORROW MORNING AND GIVE THIS NECKLACE TO VASANTASENA.



MEANWHILE EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, SHARVILAKA WENT TO MADANIKA



AS SHARVILAKA CONFIDED HIS NIGHT'S ADVENTURE TO HER.



THE JEWELS BELONG TO MY MISTRESS. SHE HAD LEFT THEM IN HIS CARE.



MADANIKA THEN TOLD HIM OF HER MISTRESS'S LOVE FOR CHARUDATTA.

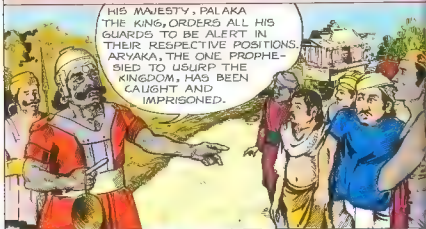




SHARVILAKA, NOT KNOWING THAT VASANTA SENA HAD OVERHEARD THE CONVERSATION, DID EXACTLY AS MADANIKA ADVISED.



AS SHARVILAKA AND MADANIKA RODE ALONG, THE KING'S HERALD WAS OUT ON THE STREETS MAKING AN ANNOUNCEMENT.



DEAR ONE, I SHALL INSTRUCT THE DRIVER TO TAKE YOU TO THE HOUSE OF A FRIEND. WAIT THERE FOR ME TILL I JOIN YOU

I SHALL DO AS YOU WISH, MY LORD. BUT PLEASE BE CAREFUL.



WHEN THE CARRIAGE DROVE AWAY WITH MADANIKA -

I SHALL CALL FOR A REVOLUTION. I SHALL GATHER ALL THE MEN WHO HAVE SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF THE KING.



HARDLY HAD SHARVILAKA AND MADANIKA LEFT, WHEN MAITREYA CAME TO VASANTASENA.

AH! MAITREYA, WELCOME. IS MY LORD WELL?

HE IS WELL. HE HAS MISPLACED YOUR JEWELS AND BEGS YOU TO ACCEPT THIS PEARL NECKLACE INSTEAD.



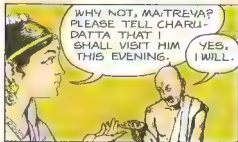
THE JEWELS WERE  
STOLEN AND HE IS TOO  
NOBLE TO ADMIT IT.  
SHOULD I BRING THEM  
OUT? NO, NOT YET.

WELL, WILL  
YOU ACCEPT  
IT?



WHY NOT, MAITREYA?  
PLEASE TELL CHARU-  
DATTA THAT I  
SHALL VISIT HIM  
THIS EVENING.

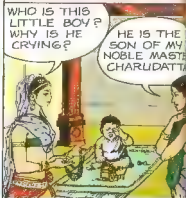
YES,  
I WILL.



THAT EVENING VASANTASEN  
WENT TO CHARUDATTA'S  
HOUSE.

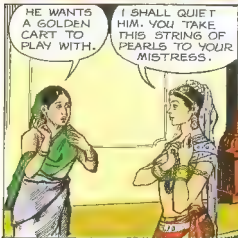
WHO IS THIS  
LITTLE BOY?  
WHY IS HE  
CRYING?

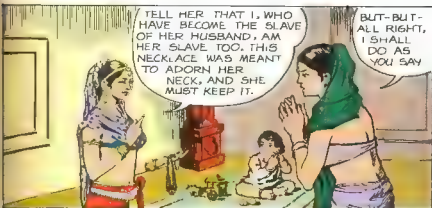
HE IS THE  
SON OF MY  
NOBLE MASTER  
CHARUDATTA.



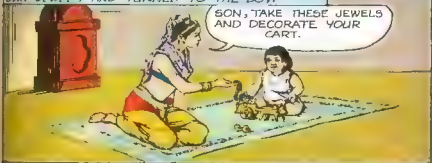
HE WANTS  
A GOLDEN  
CART TO  
PLAY WITH.

I SHALL QUIET  
HIM. YOU TAKE  
THIS STRING OF  
PEARLS TO YOUR  
MISTRESS.

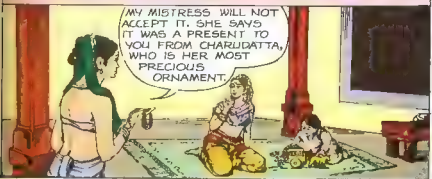




VASANTASENA THEN REMOVED SOME OF HER OWN JEWELS AND TURNED TO THE BOY.



A MOMENT LATER THE MAID RETURNED.



SHE THEN TURNED TO THE CHILD.

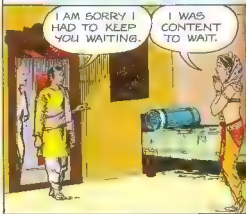
COME, MY SON, LET US GO AND PLAY. MADAM, I'LL BRING YOUR JEWELS TO YOU WHEN HE TIRES OF THEM.



A FEW MINUTES LATER CHARUDATTA ENTERED THE ROOM.

I AM SORRY I HAD TO KEEP YOU WAITING.

I WAS CONTENT TO WAIT.



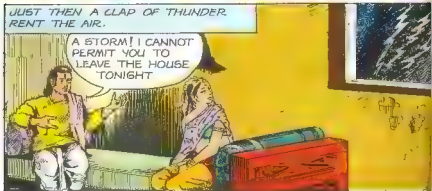
NOBLE CHARUDATTA, YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE SENT THE PEARL NECKLACE TO ONE AS UNWORTHY AS I.

MY BELOVED VASANTASENA!



JUST THEN A CLAP OF THUNDER RENT THE AIR.

A STORM! I CANNOT PERMIT YOU TO LEAVE THE HOUSE TONIGHT



AT THAT MOMENT THE MAID ENTERED.

NOBLE MASTER, MY MISTRESS SAYS THAT LADY VASANTA SENA SHOULD SPEND THE NIGHT AT OUR HOME. SHE HAS SENT ME TO GET A ROOM READY FOR HER.

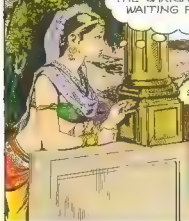
THAT SETTLES IT. YOU SHALL REST HERE TONIGHT.

WHEN THE MAID LEFT—

TOMORROW WE SHALL SPEND THE DAY IN THE GARDENS OUTSIDE THE TOWN. I SHALL LEAVE EARLY AND MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR A COTTAGE. YOU FOLLOW LATER IN MY CARRIAGE. IT WILL BE WAITING FOR YOU.

THE NEXT MORNING -

I AM READY  
MUCH EARLIER THAN  
EXPECTED. AH! THERE'S  
THE CARRIAGE,  
WAITING FOR ME.



MISTAKING IT FOR  
CHARUDATTA'S CARRIAGE,  
SHE GOT IN.



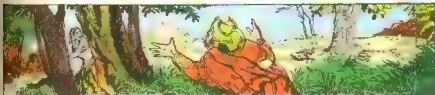
WHEN THE CARRIAGE ARRIVED  
AT THE PARK ...



...TO VASANTASENA'S DISMAY, IT WAS NOT CHARUDATTA BUT SAMSTHANAKA WHOM SHE SAW.

ALAS! I GOT INTO THE WRONG CARRIAGE.

VASANTASENA! YOU! SO YOU DID COME TO ME. AND IN MY OWN CARRIAGE!



COME, MY DEAR. WE SHALL SHARE ALL THE PLEASURES THE PARK CAN OFFER US.

LET ME GO YOU EVIL ONE. IT IS NOT YOU I SEEK BUT THE NOBLE CHARUDATTA.



SAMSTHANAKA WAS VERY ANGRY WHEN HE HEARD THE NAME OF HIS RIVAL.

YOU SHALL DIE FOR THIS, YOU BEAUTIFUL CREATURE!

HELP!  
HELP!

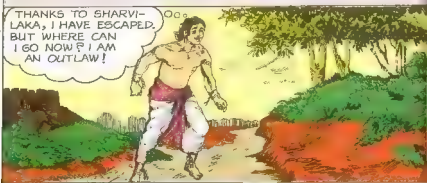


SAMSTHANAKA TRIED TO STRANGLE VASANTASENA AND, BELIEVING HER TO BE DEAD, RODE OFF IN HIS CARRIAGE.



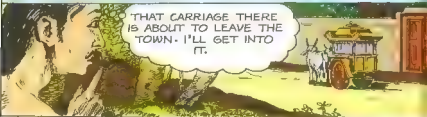
MEANWHILE ARYAKA HAD ESCAPED FROM PRISON.

THANKS TO SHARVILAKA, I HAVE ESCAPED. BUT WHERE CAN I GO NOW? I AM AN OUTLAW!



JUST THEN HE SAW CHARUDATTA'S CARRIAGE WHICH WAS WAITING FOR VASANTASENA.

THAT CARRIAGE THERE IS ABOUT TO LEAVE THE TOWN. I'LL GET INTO IT.



THE DRIVER MISTOOK THE CLANKING OF ARYAKA'S CHAINS FOR THE TINKLE OF VASANTASENA'S ANKLETS.



HER ANKLETS ARE QUIET. THE LADY MUST HAVE SETTLED DOWN. I SHALL DRIVE ON.

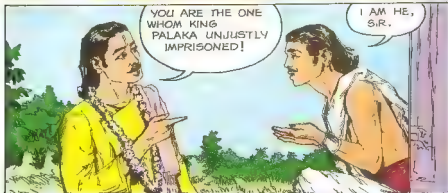


WHEN THE CARRIAGE ARRIVED AT THE PARK, THE EAGER CHARUDATTA STEPPED FORWARD TO HELP HIS LADY-LOVE OUT.



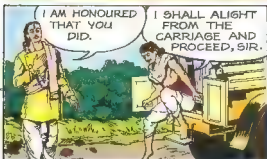
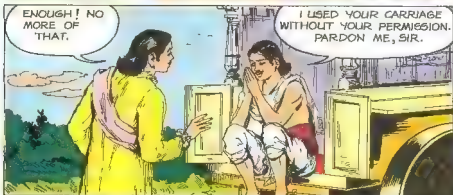
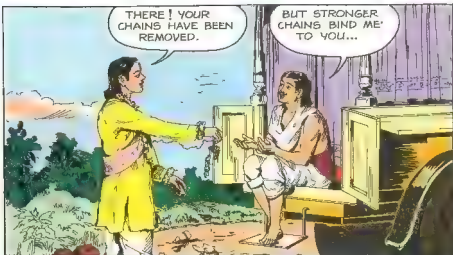
OH! OH! WHO ARE YOU, SIR?

I AM ARYAKA, THE SON OF GOPALA. I AM AT YOUR MERCY.



YOU ARE THE ONE WHOM KING PALAKA UNJUSTLY IMPRISONED!

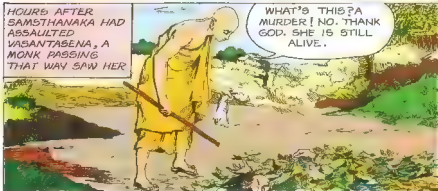
I AM HE, S.R.



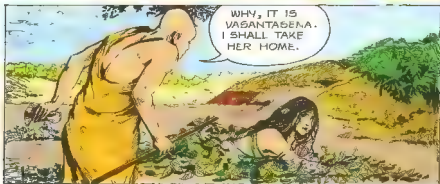
AFTER ARYAKA HAD LEFT -



HOURS AFTER  
SAMSTHANAKA HAD  
ASSAULTED  
VASANTASENA, A  
MONK PASSING  
THAT WAY SAW HER



WHY, IT IS  
VASANTASENA.  
I SHALL TAKE  
HER HOME.



SAMSTHANAKA MEANWHILE WAS WORRIED ABOUT HIS DEED.

I HAVE MURDERED VASANTASENA. TO SAVE MY SKIN, I'D BETTER GO TO THE COURT AND PRESENT A CHARGE, ACCUSING CHARU - DATTA OF THE MURDER.



YES! THAT'S WHAT I SHALL SAY. CHARUDATTA, DISTRESSED BY HIS POVERTY, MURDERED THE WEALTHY DANCING GIRL, FOR HER JEWELS.

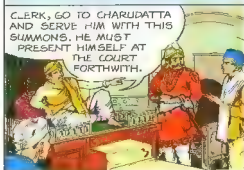


MEANWHILE CHARUDATTA HAD JUST RETURNED HOME.

SHE IS NOT HERE EITHER, THESE ARE HER JEWELS. WHAT ARE THEY DOING IN MY SON'S TOY CLAY-CART?

AT THE COURT AFTER SAMSTHANAKA HAD LODGED HIS CHARGE -

CLERK, GO TO CHARUDATTA AND SERVE HIM WITH THIS SUMMONS. HE MUST PRESENT HIMSELF AT THE COURT FORTHWITH.



HE SENT FOR MAITREYA.

TAKE THESE JEWELS BACK TO VASANTABENA. SHE MUST HAVE GIVEN THEM TO THE CHILD TO PLAY WITH AND FORGOTTEN ABOUT THEM

I WILL GO RIGHT AWAY, SIR.

WHEN MAITREYA HAD LEFT -

I HOPE MAITREYA FINDS HER AT HOME.

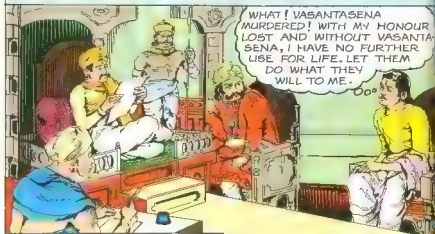
JUST THEN THE CLERK ENTERED AND SERVED HIS SUMMONS.

I AM BEWILDERED. WHAT DOES THE COURT SUSPECT? IS IT BECAUSE ARYAKA ESCAPED IN MY CARRIAGE?

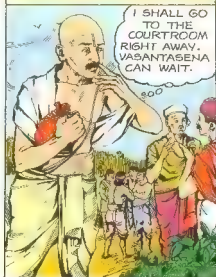
WELL, I SHALL SOON KNOW.

COME, LEAD ME TO THE COURTROOM.

AT THE COURT THE MOMENT CHARUDATTA HEARD THE CHARGES READ OUT, HE LOST ALL INTEREST IN THE CASE.



MAITREYA, ON HIS WAY TO VASANTASENA'S HOUSE, HEARD THE NEWS ABOUT CHARUDATTA FACING A TRIAL FOR MURDER.



AS THE CASE PROCEEDED, MAITREYA BURST INTO THE COURTROOM.

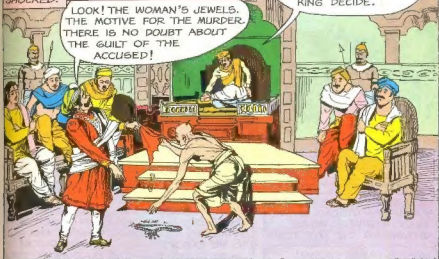
WHO IS THIS SCOUNDREL? HE HAS NO RIGHT TO DISTURB THE PROCEEDINGS.



IN THE SCUFFLE THAT FOLLOWED, VASANTASENA'S JEWELS ROLLED OUT OF MATREYA'S ROBES. THE COURT WAS SHOCKED.

LOOK! THE WOMAN'S JEWELS. THE MOTIVE FOR THE MURDER. THERE IS NO DOUBT ABOUT THE GUILT OF THE ACCUSED!

HE IS A BRAHMAN. I CANNOT SENTENCE HIM TO DEATH. LET THE KING DECIDE.



THE MESSENGER WHO WAS SENT TO THE KING SOON RETURNED. THE JUDGE READ OUT THE SENTENCE.

THE KING HAS DECIDED THAT YOU SHOULD BE EXECUTED WITH THE STOLEN JEWELS AROUND YOUR NECK.



AND SO CHARUDATTA WAS LED THROUGH THE STREETS, TILL THEY NEARED THE EXECUTION GROUNDS ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE TOWN.



MEANWHILE THE MONK AND VASANTASENA, NOW FULLY REVIVED, WERE RETURNING TO THE TOWN.

WHAT A LARGE CROWD!  
WHAT A COMMOTION!  
WHAT CAN THE MATTER BE?



THE MONK SUDDENLY STOOD STILL.

GOOD LORD! THEY SAY CHARUDATTA IS GOING TO BE EXECUTED FOR MURDERING YOU.

OH! WRETCH THAT I AM. QUICK! QUICK! LEAD ME TO HIM.



AS THE EXECUTIONERS WERE GETTING READY-

VASANTASENA, DEAD OR ALIVE, YOU WILL ONE DAY PROVE MY INNOCENCE. VIRTUE WILL TRIUMPH OVER EVIL.



AS IF IN REPLY TO HIS APPEAL -

STOP! STOP! I AM  
ALIVE. CHARUDATTA  
MUST NOT BE  
EXECUTED! HE IS  
INNOCENT.

AMAZING!

VASANTASENA  
ALIVE!

STRANGE

CHARUDATTA COULD NOT  
BELIEVE HIS EYES.

YES,  
CHARUDATTA!  
IT IS I,  
VASANTASENA,  
VERY MUCH  
ALIVE!

THEN VASANTASENA TURNED TO THE  
CROWD.

HEAR, ALL OF YOU. IT WAS  
THE EVIL SAMSTHANAKA  
WHO TRIED TO MURDER  
ME!

AT THAT MOMENT -

THERE COMES THE SCOUNDREL  
TO SEE IF HIS EVIL PLANS  
HAVE SUCCEEDED! KILL HIM!

NO, I BEG YOU, PLEASE  
SPARE HIS LIFE. THE PUNISH-  
MENT HE NEEDS IS  
KINDNESS.

A MAN PUSHED HIS WAY THROUGH THE CROWD. IT WAS SHARVILAKA.

I HAVE SLAIN PALAKA. ARYAKA IS NOW OUR KING.

AH! THAT'S VERY GOOD NEWS.



KING ARYAKA HAS NAMED YOU VICEROY OF KUSHAVATI. HE HAS ALSO CONFERRED UPON NOBLE VASANTASENA THE STATUS OF "SECOND WIFE TO CHARUDATTA".

WIFE TO CHARUDATTA! AH HOW SWEET THE WORDS SOUND.



CHARUDATTA LED VASANTASENA TO HIS WIFE WHO WELCOMED THE TALENTED YOUNG DANCER.

MAITREYA HAS GIVEN US THE GOOD NEWS. WELCOME, LITTLE SISTER. YOU HAVE BROUGHT GOOD FORTUNE TO OUR HUSBAND AND HIS HOUSEHOLD.

I MUST HASTEN TO MADANIKA, WHO MUST BE ANXIOUSLY WAITING FOR ME.

